

REMARKS

Prior to entry of this response, claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11 were pending in the application, of which claim 1 is independent. In the Office Action dated November 30, 2004, the examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The examiner also rejected claims 1, 3, 4 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 130(a) as being obvious in view of Japanese Publication JP 8-131215 in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,590,444 (Krauss). The examiner further rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 130(a) as being obvious in view of JP 8-131215 in further view of Krauss in further view of U.S. Patent No. 3,979,934 (Isenmann). The examiner objected to claims 10 and 11 as depending from a rejected base claim and said they would be allowable if re-written in independent form to include all limitations from the base claim and any intervening claim. Following this response, claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11 remain in this application.

I. Interview Summary

In a telephone interview on March 24, 2005, proposed amendments to claim 1 were discussed. We also discussed the cited prior art. Applicants would like to sincerely thank the examiner for participating in the interview and believe the amendments made in this response reflect the substance of the discussions from the interview.

II. 112 Rejection

In the Office action, the examiner noted several points in claim 1 where there was confusion regarding the terms "butting portions", "straight portions", "continuous" and "the concave portion or the convex portion" as previously presented in the claim. In

accordance with the discussed proposed claim amendments from the interview, Applicants have amended claim 1 to clarify these terms and address the examiner's noted issues. Additionally, Applicants have amended claims 3, 4, 7 and 8 to conform to the amendments in claim 1. The amendments are fully supported by the specification and no new matter has been introduced. Accordingly, Applicants request the examiner withdraw the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 of claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

III. 103 Rejection

The examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 130(a) as being obvious in view of JP 8-131215 in further view of Krauss. Amended claim 1 recites, in part, that "the concave portion or the convex portion is formed at a center of the first butting portions between the flexible insertion legs while sandwiched by the first straight portions, the convex portion in the first butting portions protrudes between the flexible insertion legs in a trapezoidal form in which a front end is slightly narrowed, while the concave portion is concavely dented between where the flexible insertion legs are inserted in the trapezoidal form with the inlet expanded." As explained on page 15 of the present application, such structure helps prevent lateral rocking. The buckle disclosed in JP 8-131215 lacks a trapezoidal convex or concave portion that is not disposed between the flexible insertion legs of the buckle. Krauss fails to cure this defect. Indeed, while Krauss discloses an interlocking key with a trapezoidal form, the key is on the side of the buckle and is not disposed between the flexible insertion legs of the buckle. Thus, none of the structure disclosed in JP 8-131215 or Krauss have concave or convex portions in a trapezoidal form that lie between the flexible insertion

legs as recited in amended claim 1 and, as a result, cannot prevent rocking in a lateral direction as achieved by the buckle of amended claim 1.

In summary, as the cited references do not disclose, teach, or suggest the invention recited in amended claim 1, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claim 1. Applicants also submit that the remaining claims (*i.e.*, claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11) should be allowed at least due to their dependency on patentable claim 1.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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